



Analysis

Artwork initially surveyed in the facilities could be categorized as either program art, personal art or murals (see ECEiii package). Program art is that which has been put into place with some consideration given to theme, quality, disposition and outfitting. Much of this artwork is of good quality, but in many cases is poorly displayed. Personal art is that which is brought in by the occupants (and usually does not constitute a cohesive collection); this type of artwork varies widely in quality and works best when used in the personal space of the owner (such as a private office or cubicle). Murals are either large photomurals scattered throughout the space, or painted directly onto the wall surface. Painted murals were generally confined to children's areas.

Framed program artwork is more appropriate in these facilities, as it assures uniform quality and greater flexibility than the murals and personal art.

Themes

Themes may be classified into four groups: landscapes, still life, figurative and juvenile. Subject matter is selected upon exclusionary criteria (with juvenile works excepted) - no portraiture, no animals, no food, no optical illusions, and no abstraction that might be offensive in a medical office environment (e.g, harsh line or intense color). Selection is further based upon scale and clarity as necessitated by the environment.

One interesting element concerning art selection that has gained considerable attention is its use as a therapeutic element in healing environments. Artwork that provides positive distraction (such as in chemo treatment areas and LDRPs) is an essential part of the patient's healing and well-being. Images that give hope, serenity and that celebrate life are very positive and are welcome in the healing environment.

Numerous studies have suggested that pictures of nature scenes (either looking out of a window, or looking at a clear photograph of nature) reduces stress in many people. Recent scientific studies conducted by Roger Ulrich, PhD and others report that "that patients who had bedside views of nature had briefer hospital stays and needed less medication (Science, 1984)".¹

In 1992 Dr. Ulrich and his colleague Russ Parsons, PhD, reported that "visual exposure to (nature) settings has produced significant recovery from stress within only five minutes, as indicated by changes in physiological measures such as blood pressure and muscle tension."² It is proven that scenes of nature "triggers the innate human response to nature which is to relax, recharge, and restore, even within the confines of a healthcare facility".³

Selecting the appropriate artwork for various spaces has become increasingly important. There are several art vendors that have GSA contracts and provide art consultation services. It is recommended that these companies are contacted prior to sizable art purchases, and are given an opportunity to create a cohesive, professionally designed art package that supports the healing environment. A list of these vendors is provided at the end of this section.

Kathy Hathorn, President of American Art Resources, gives the following advice when selecting themed artwork for healthcare facilities:

Main public spaces – Broadest general appeal to the particular community; non-gender specific themes; geographical pieces work well and are most appropriate choices; “realistic” artwork is preferred over abstract.

Dining areas – Tranquil, restful images that provide relaxation

Administrative areas (includes Human Resources) – Professional, corporate appearance, referencing the management style of the hospital; can reference the type of patient care that is administered (such as pictures of children in a pediatric hospital).

Admissions/Cashier’s areas – Warm, inviting, comforting

Chapel – Simple landscapes or seascapes with a meditative quality (particularly if the hospital wants a non-denominational image)

Clinical areas – Images that reduce patient anxiety and that are interesting to gaze over are encouraged; avoid pictures of food.

Chemotherapy or general recovery areas – Clear, still photographs are best

IV Ready rooms – Humorous or light-hearted themes that divert attention work well

Physical Therapy – Sports images work well, or an image that promotes a healthy life or celebrates life is best

Mammography – Beautiful images of general interest to women (i.e, flowers)

Rehab units – Challenging, uplifting, inspiring and contemplative art is encouraged; for head injury, the images are to be simple and clear; avoid double images such as reflection pools or fuzzy impressionistic paintings

Pediatrics – Child-style while maintaining a broad range of appeal as far as age is concerned; primary colors are used extensively for infants and young children, and secondary colors are used for older children

Obstetrics – Actual photographs of people can be used here, but must relate to the community it serves (i.e, Hispanic, Native American, Caucasian, African-American, etc.). Images of babies depicted as fine art in an impressionistic style is encouraged.

LDR/LDRPs – Images that provide positive distraction work well; humorous or light-hearted themes can be used to provide visual interest

Consult Rooms – Quiet, dignified images that impart the hospital’s concern

Patient Ward Corridors – Large (somewhere between 26x30 and 32x40 inches); patients’ age, gender, length of stay, and reason for hospitalization are to be considered

Psychiatric Units – Artwork that visually stimulates the patient is encouraged, but great care must be given to avoid the following: harsh colors (black, chartreuse, orange, red); jagged lines or images with chaotic movement (such as the work of Van Gogh); optical illusions; landscapes with reflecting images; abstract or surreal images; and figurative art. ⁴

Solution

Artwork selections are taken from GSA sources and are usually poster art.

Specification

Consistency in framing and theming is critical in creating a cohesive art collection. Artwork is to be matted and framed in a similar fashion. Recent program art has been framed primarily in brushed chrome or aluminum frames. This, perhaps, is the most versatile solution as it provides a durable material finish with broad applications. In order to derive the fullest benefit from an art program, the works are to be framed with neutral frames and mats appropriately sized to enhance the works.

Posters and prints are to be cropped to remove titles and copy from the presentation. A mat is recommended in order to give the works greater presence. The basic artwork specification is to be as follows:

Framing:

Frame-face dimension is to be approximately 2.54 cm (1")

Brushed or polished chrome or aluminum

Concealed security retaining device

Mat

Mat face to be approximately 3"-5" wide (due to long halls and wide corridors in a hospital setting)

Color to be white, off-white or soft neutral

Double mats to be used for special emphasis - inner mat to be accent color that complements image

Glazing

Window glass is readily available, inexpensive and easy to clean, but is heavy and prone to breaking; not recommended in highly trafficked corridors or psychiatric units, or for prints over 30" x 40"

Acrylic glazing is prone to scratching, but is shatter-resistant; can be more difficult to clean than window glass.

Artwork Installation

According to Kathy Hathorn, President of American Art Resources, the "proper height to install framed artwork is approximately 53" to 63" from the floor to the bottom of the top one-third of the picture. Works in a series are to be hung at the same height, and are not to be staggered or stair-stepped. Generally speaking, the larger or more detailed the image, the farther apart the pieces should be placed."⁵

Security mount devices for framed artwork are highly recommended, particularly when artwork is installed in public spaces such as corridors and waiting spaces.

Artwork Bibliography:

- ¹ Bedscapes Healing Environments. "Research Results." Online at website <http://www.bedscapes.com/research.htm>, 2001.
- ² "Influence of Passive Experiences with Plants on Individual Well-Being and Health" in Felf, D. (ed.) 1992, *The Role of Horticulture in Human Well-Being and Social Development*, Portland, OR; Timber Press, p. 102).
- ³ Bedscapes Healing Environments. "Research Results." Online at website <http://www.bedscapes.com/research.htm>, 2001.
- ⁴ Hathorn, Kathy. "The Use of Art in a Health Care Setting." *Therapeutic Environments*, American Art Resources. Online at website http://americanartresources.com/therapeutic/art_in.aps.
- ⁵ Hathorn, Kathy. "The Use of Art in a Health Care Setting." *Therapeutic Environments*, American Art Resources. Online at website http://americanartresources.com/therapeutic/art_in.aps.

Artwork Manufacturer's Representation:**American Art Resources**

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